

TO THE CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS
OF THE
LOFTUS URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.



Gentlemen,

I beg to submit my Annual Report for the year 1941 which, in accordance with the instructions of the Minister of Health, is again confined to essential and urgent matters affecting the public health.

The population is estimated to have fallen slightly, but to less extent than in 1940. The birth-rate is slightly higher than in 1938 which itself had the highest rate of the five years 1934—38. The death-rate is almost exactly equal to the average rate of the five years preceding 1939, and the infant mortality rate is also satisfactory.

Of notifiable diseases measles was very prevalent, with 303 cases: diphtheria also presented more cases than usual but there was no death from this disease. Other acute notifiable disease was almost entirely absent.

A slight increase occurred in the number of lung cases of tuberculosis, and deaths also from this disease were above the recent average. This is of more importance as reflecting, in a small way, the experience of the whole country, and therefore probably cannot be put down to an artificial fluctuation from the small numbers involved, but depends on the operation of powerful factors associated with the war and hence likely to continue for the present and even increase. Of these factors possibly the most important is the strain, especially mental, affecting nearly everyone under the conditions of war. As this will not be lessened until victory, it behoves public health authorities meanwhile to scrutinise carefully their operations designed for the prevention of this disease and to obtain improvement if possible. Broadly, prevention rests on two groups of measures: those maintaining or raising the general health of the people, by good nutrition with fresh foods, good housing, and so on; and those aiming at the prevention of the infection of new cases by the earliest possible diagnosis of the disease and the removal of the infectious consumptive from close contact with non-infected persons (especially children) until he is no longer a source of danger. Tuberculosis is spread undoubtedly to a certain extent by milk from diseased cows, but the main fact is that the paramount source of infection is the consumptive. Unfortunately, perhaps, while the infection of diphtheria, measles, etc., takes but a few days to develop and show itself, so that the connection of one case with an earlier one is often very clear, the infection of tuberculosis usually takes many years to become evident, and so one is inclined to forget even that it is an infectious disease, in which, as in the others, measures of isolation are of importance. In the Combined Districts, in the year 1941, deaths from all the acuter infectious diseases together, such as diphtheria, measles, cerebro-spinal fever, and so on (but not including pneumonia as an infectious disease) totalled, in all, 21: deaths from tuberculosis numbered 35. Of these thirty-five deaths twenty-eight were due to tuberculosis of the lungs, and these patients had, without doubt, been infectious for months or years before their death. Among these twenty-eight cases twenty-three spent at least their last months, when the infection was likely to be at its height, and died, in their own homes. One cannot avoid the conclusion that a tragic crop of future cases has been silently sown, and will inexorably be harvested in years to come.

Children Immunised Against Diphtheria.

Number immunised		Guisborough U.D.	Loftus U.D.	Redcar Borough	Saltburn and Marske U.D.	Skelton and Brotton U.D.
at end of 1940	...	436	342	1287	624	462
during 1941	...	301	151	948	497	957
to 30/6/1942	...	119	411	208	293	34
Total immunised						
1935—30/6/1942	...	856	904	2443	1414	1453
Estimated total number of children under 15 years old	...	1807	1860	5350	1283	3199
Percentage of children immunised		47½%	48½%	45½%	100%	45½%

In the Combined Districts there were in 1941 sixty-three cases of diphtheria notified in children under 15 years of age: fifty-five (with five deaths) in children who had not been immunised, and eight (with no deaths) in children who had received immunising injections. The insurance afforded by immunisation cannot now be doubted; the safety is evidenced by the fact that out of many thousand immunised in the combined districts no case of any trouble, beyond an occasional very temporary redness of the arm, has been reported.

No single case of scarlet fever was notified in the district during the year, for the first time as far back as the records of cases go. This diminution of scarlet fever has been shared with the others of the combined districts, although not found in the statistics of the country as a whole. The total cases in the combined districts in the three years 1939 to 1941 were only 183, while in the single year 1938 there were 195 cases, and in 1937, 319, a figure which previously had several times been exceeded. If, and when, the disease does become epidemic locally again, it will find a larger proportion of children unprotected by a previous attack, and it is to be hoped that it will maintain the mild type that has characterised it of recent years in increasing degree.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

Guisborough,
27th August, 1942.

C. R. GIBSON,

Medical Officer of Health.

Vital Statistics for 1941.

Population, estimated for mid-1941 by Registrar-General: 7,020.

Number of births 126; birth-rate 17·9.

(Average 1934—38, 108; birth-rate 13·9).

Number of deaths of residents, 85; death-rate, 12·1.

(Average 1934—38, 95; death-rate 12·2).

Infant Mortality Rate: 62 infant deaths per thousand births.

(Average 1934—38, 74½).

Notifications received: Diphtheria 16; cerebro-spinal fever 1; poliomyelitis 1; puerperal pyrexia 1; erysipelas 1; pneumonia 3; measles 303; whooping cough 1.

Tuberculosis (new cases): 4 pulmonary; 1 non-pulmonary.